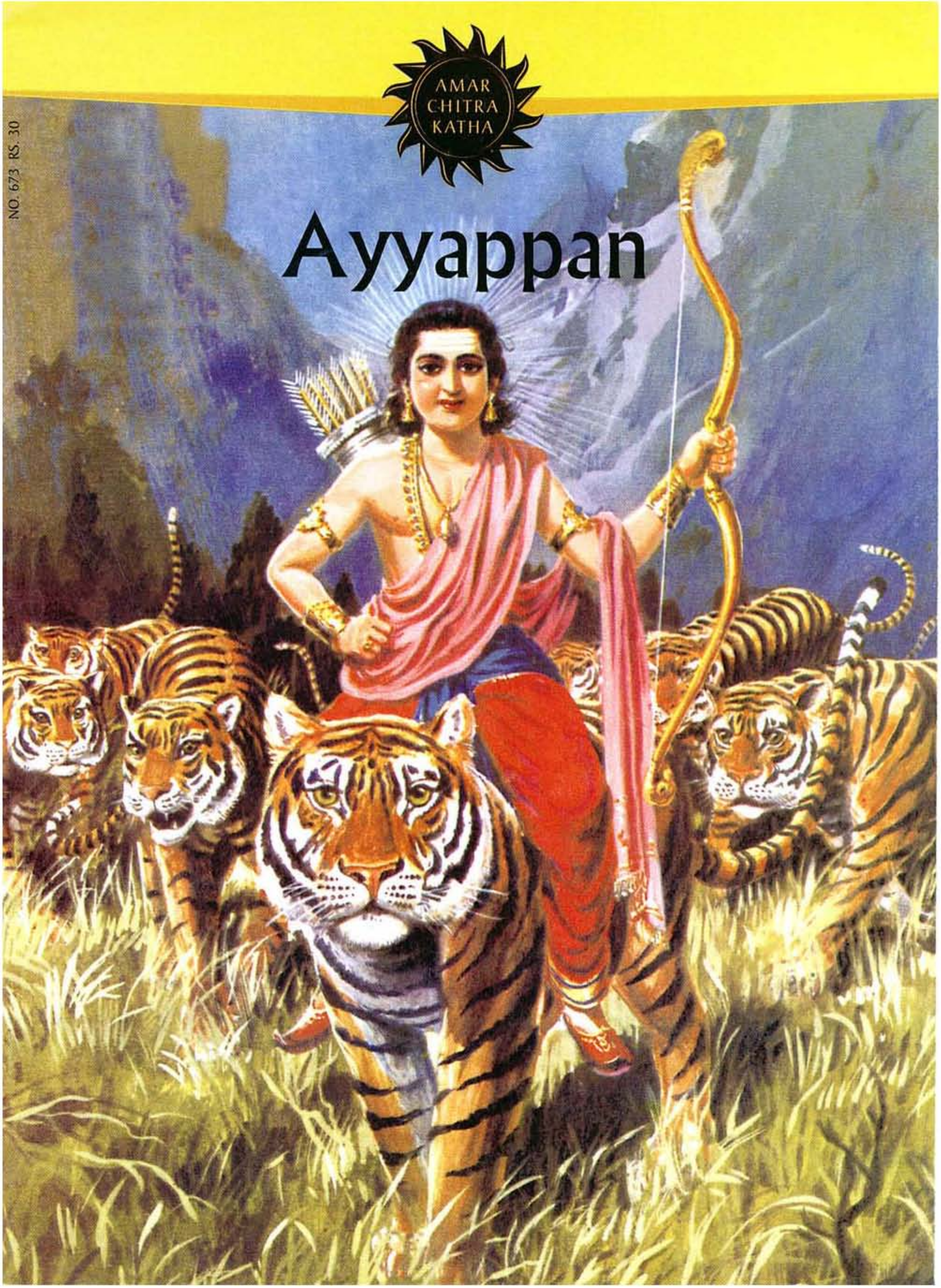

AMAR
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Ayyappan
NO. 673 RS. 30

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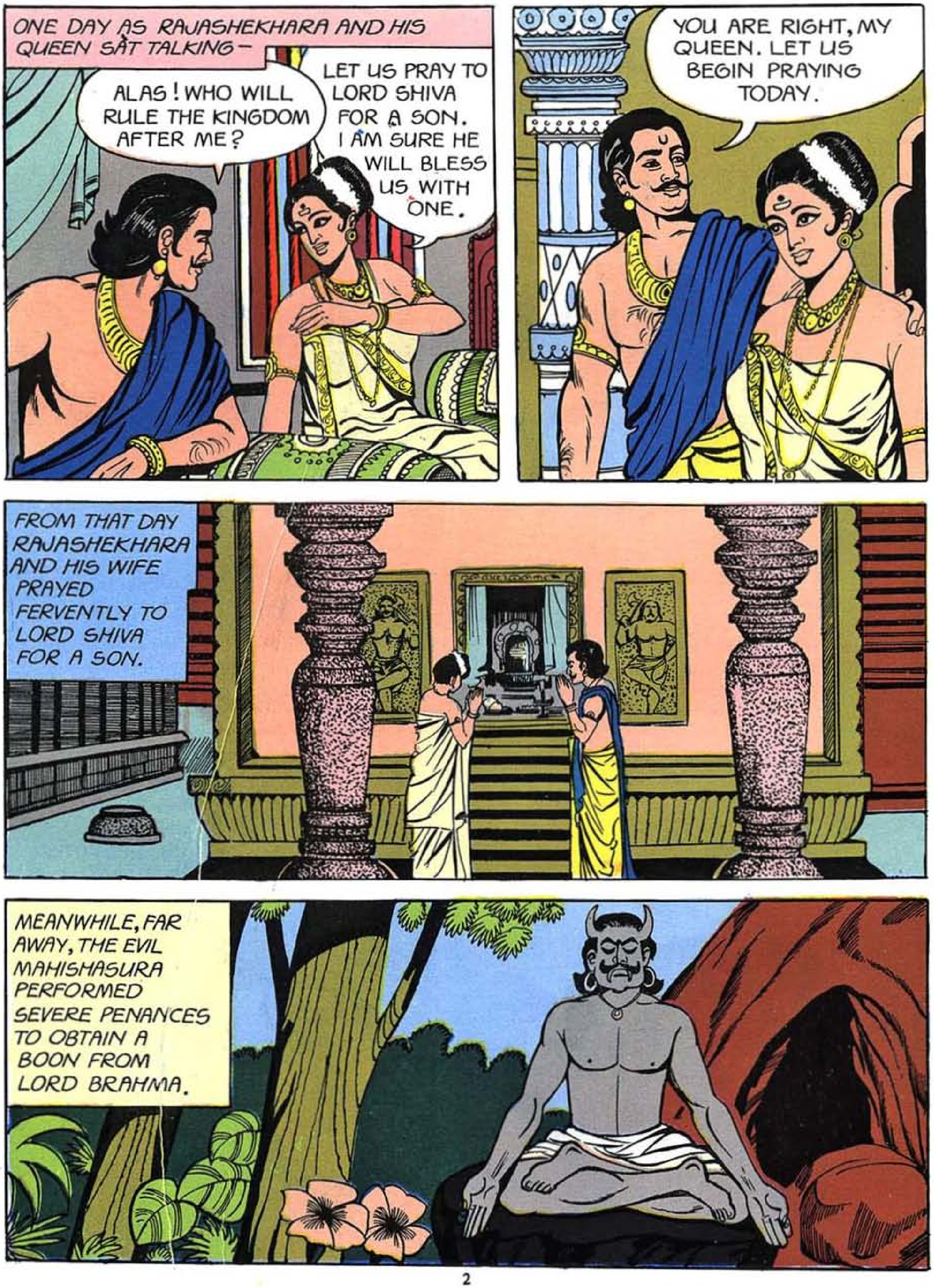
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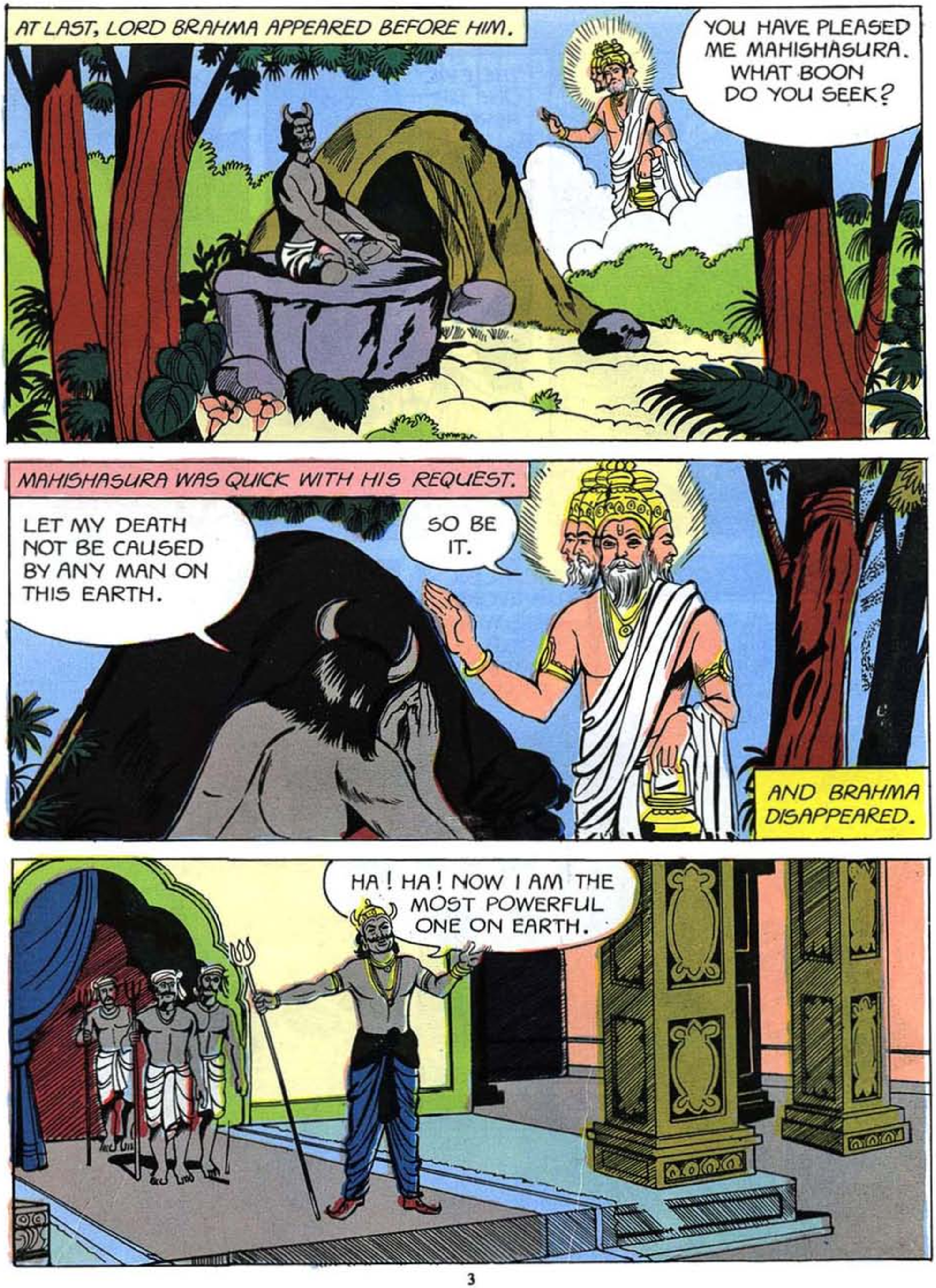
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INDIA BOOK HOUSE

 Reprinted: August 2005 ISBN: 81-7508-198-8
Published and Printed by India Book House Pvt Ltd, Mahalaxmi Chambers, 5th Floor, 22 Bhulabhai Desai Road, Mumbai 400 026, India.


AYYAPPAN
KING RAJASHEKHARA, THE WEALTHY RULER OF PANTHALAM, IN KERALA, HAD NO CHILDREN.
HIS SUBJECTS WERE WORRIED.
IF THERE IS NO HEIR TO THE THRONE, WHAT WILL BECOME OF US WHEN OUR KING DIES?
O THAT HE WERE BLESSED WITH A SON.
YES. A SON AS PIOUS AND GENEROUS AS HE IS!
HIS AMBITIOUS DIWAN, HOWEVER, WAS HAPPY.
AS LONG AS THERE IS NO HEIR TO THE THRONE, WHEN RAJASHEKHARA DIES HIS KINGDOM WILL CERTAINLY BE MINE.


ONE DAY AS RAJASHEKHARA AND HIS QUEEN SAT TALKING—
ALAS! WHO WILL RULE THE KINGDOM AFTER ME?
LET US PRAY TO LORD SHIVA FOR A SON. I AM SURE HE WILL BLESS US WITH ONE.
YOU ARE RIGHT, MY QUEEN. LET US BEGIN PRAYING TODAY.
FROM THAT DAY RAJASHEKHARA AND HIS WIFE PRAYED FERVENTLY TO LORD SHIVA FOR A SON.
MEANWHILE, FAR AWAY, THE EVIL MAHISHASURA PERFORMED SEVERE PENANCES TO OBTAIN A BOON FROM LORD BRAHMA.

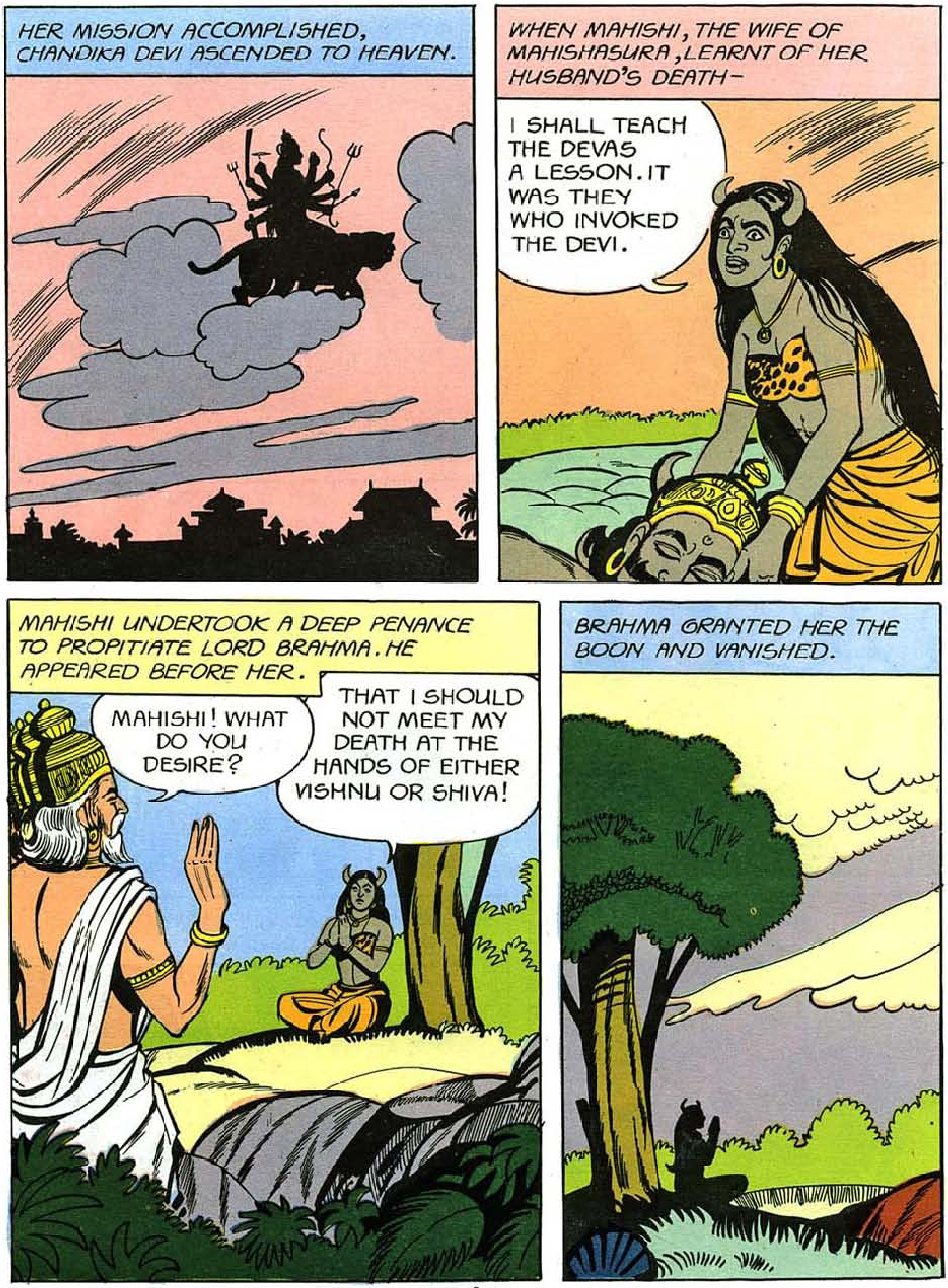

AT LAST, LORD BRAHMA APPEARED BEFORE HIM.
YOU HAVE PLEASED ME MAHISHASURA. WHAT BOON DO YOU SEEK?
MAHISHASURA WAS QUICK WITH HIS REQUEST.
LET MY DEATH NOT BE CAUSED BY ANY MAN ON THIS EARTH.
SO BE IT.
AND BRAHMA DISAPPEARED.
HA! HA! NOW I AM THE MOST POWERFUL ONE ON EARTH.


EMBOLDENED BY THE BOON, MAHISHASURA BEGAN HARASSING ALL ON EARTH.
THE EVIL ONE IS HERE!
RUN!
O DEVAS, SAVE US!
THE DEVAS HELD COUNCIL.
THIS ASURA MUST BE DESTROYED. BECAUSE OF BRAHMA'S BOON, ONLY A WOMAN WOULD BE ABLE TO DO IT.
THEN LET US EVOKE ONE WITH OUR COMBINED POWERS.

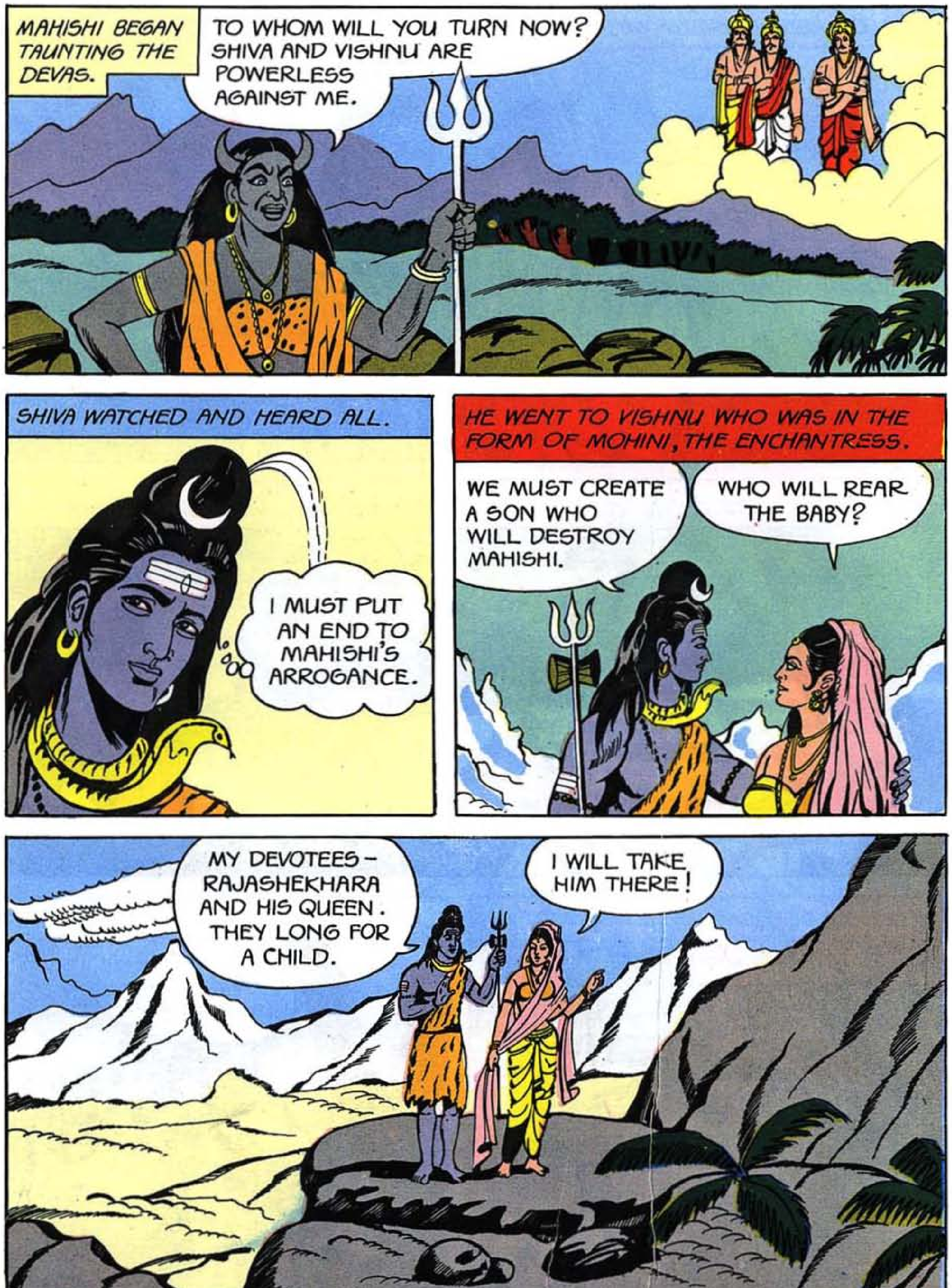

AS SOON AS THE WOMAN APPEARED BEFORE THEM—
HA! HA! HA!
WE WILL CALL HER CHANDIKA DEVI.
DEVI! GO TO EARTH AND DESTROY THE EVIL MAHISHASURA.
LAUGHING ALL THE WHILE, CHANDIKA DEVI DESCENDED ON EARTH. THE WHOLE WORLD SHOOK WITH THE FORCE.
HA! HA! HA!
WHO IS THAT SENSELESS WOMAN? GO BRING HER TO ME.

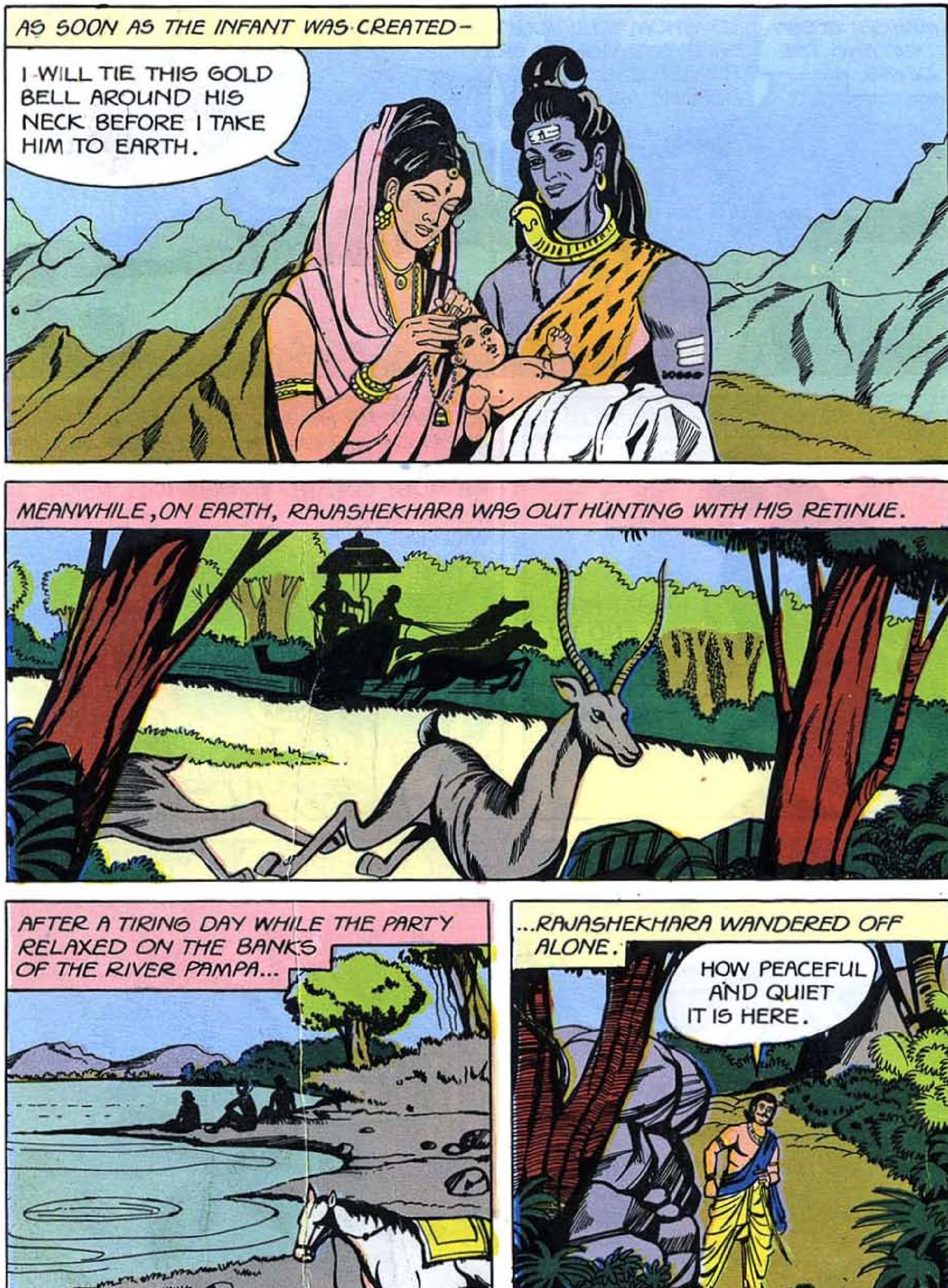

BUT CHANDIKA DEVI VANQUISHED THEM IN NO TIME.
THEY RETURNED TO MAHISHASURA.
LORD! WE HAD TO RETREAT.
TAKE THE WHOLE ARMY IF NECESSARY; BUT **BRING HER HERE!**
HOWEVER, THE ARMY WAS NO MATCH EITHER FOR CHANDIKA DEVI. IT WAS SOON ROUTED.


MAHISHASURA WAS MAD WITH ANGER. HE APPROACHED CHANDIKA DEVI FIERCELY...
THAT WOMAN HAS GONE TOO FAR. I SHALL DESTROY HER.
...AND ATTACKED HER.
HA! HA! HA!
BUT HE, TOO, WAS NO MATCH FOR HER AND WAS SOON SLAIN.

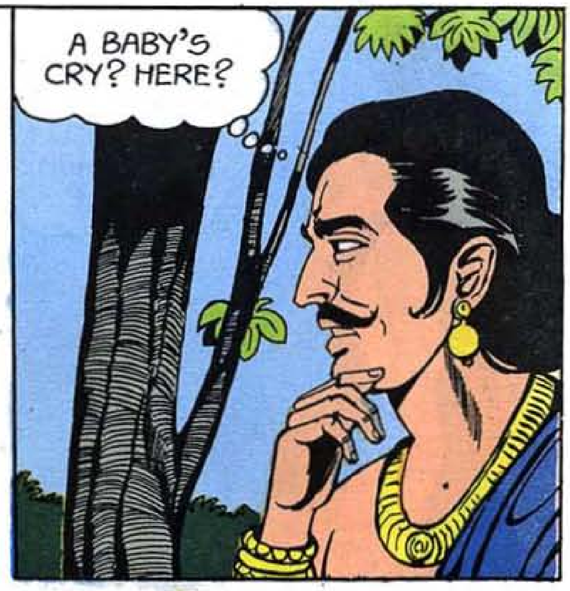


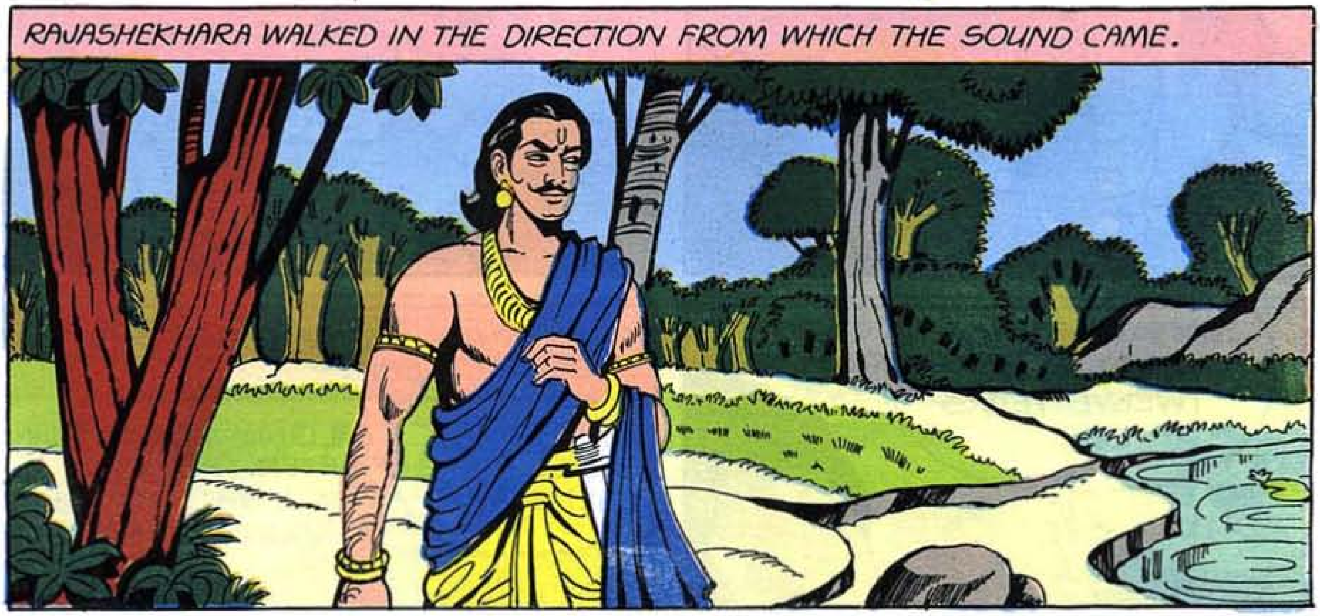
HER MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, CHANDIKA DEVI ASCENDED TO HEAVEN.
WHEN MAHISHI, THE WIFE OF MAHISHASURA, LEARNT OF HER HUSBAND'S DEATH–
I SHALL TEACH THE DEVAS A LESSON. IT WAS THEY WHO INVOKED THE DEVI.
MAHISHI UNDERTOOK A DEEP PENANCE TO PROPITIATE LORD BRAHMA. HE APPEARED BEFORE HER.
MAHISHI! WHAT DO YOU DESIRE?
THAT I SHOULD NOT MEET MY DEATH AT THE HANDS OF EITHER VISHNU OR SHIVA!
BRAHMA GRANTED HER THE BOON AND VANISHED.


MAHISHI BEGAN TAUNTING THE DEVAS.
TO WHOM WILL YOU TURN NOW? SHIVA AND VISHNU ARE POWERLESS AGAINST ME.
SHIVA WATCHED AND HEARD ALL.
I MUST PUT AN END TO MAHISHI'S ARROGANCE.
HE WENT TO VISHNU WHO WAS IN THE FORM OF MOHINI, THE ENCHANTRESS.
WE MUST CREATE A SON WHO WILL DESTROY MAHISHI.
WHO WILL REAR THE BABY?
MY DEVOTEES - RAJASHEKHARA AND HIS QUEEN. THEY LONG FOR A CHILD.
I WILL TAKE HIM THERE!

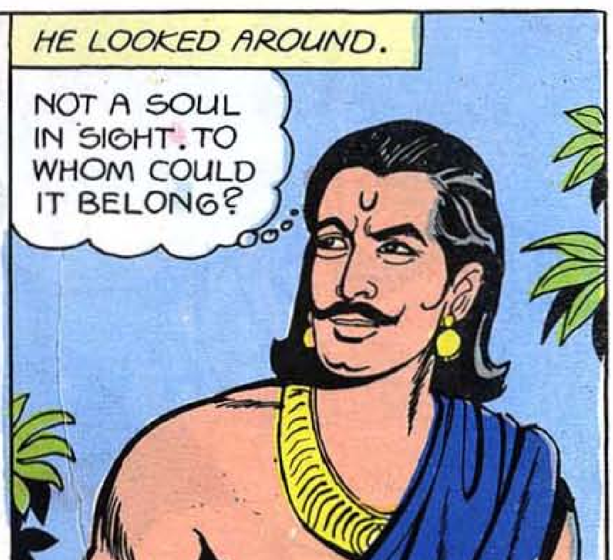

AS SOON AS THE INFANT WAS CREATED–
I WILL TIE THIS GOLD BELL AROUND HIS NECK BEFORE I TAKE HIM TO EARTH.
MEANWHILE, ON EARTH, RAJASHEKHARA WAS OUT HUNTING WITH HIS RETINUE.
AFTER A TIRING DAY WHILE THE PARTY RELAXED ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER PAMPA...
...RAJASHEKHARA WANDERED OFF ALONE.
HOW PEACEFUL AND QUIET IT IS HERE.

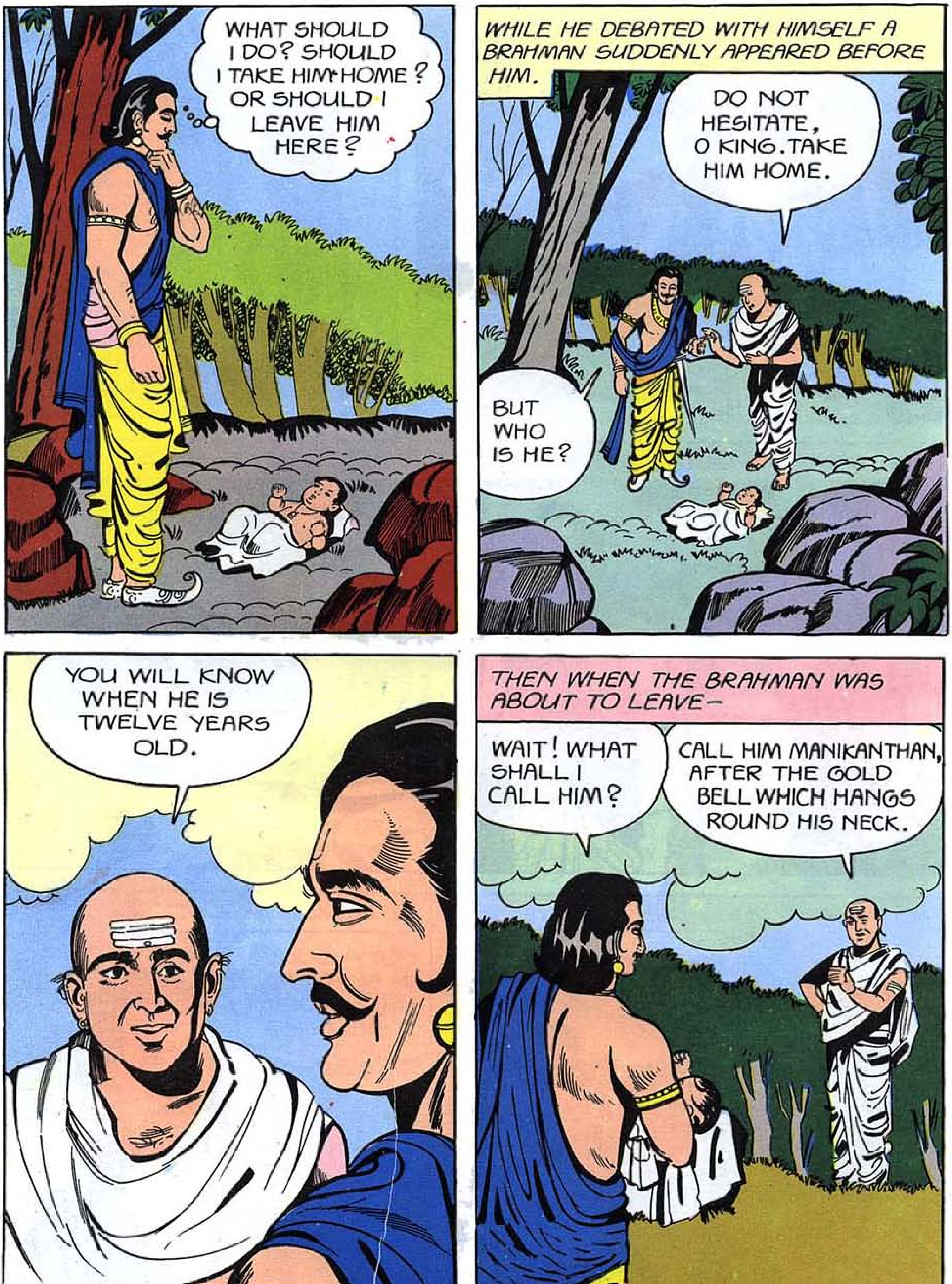

SUDDENLY HE HEARD A FEEBLE WAIL.
WAH! WAH..WAH!

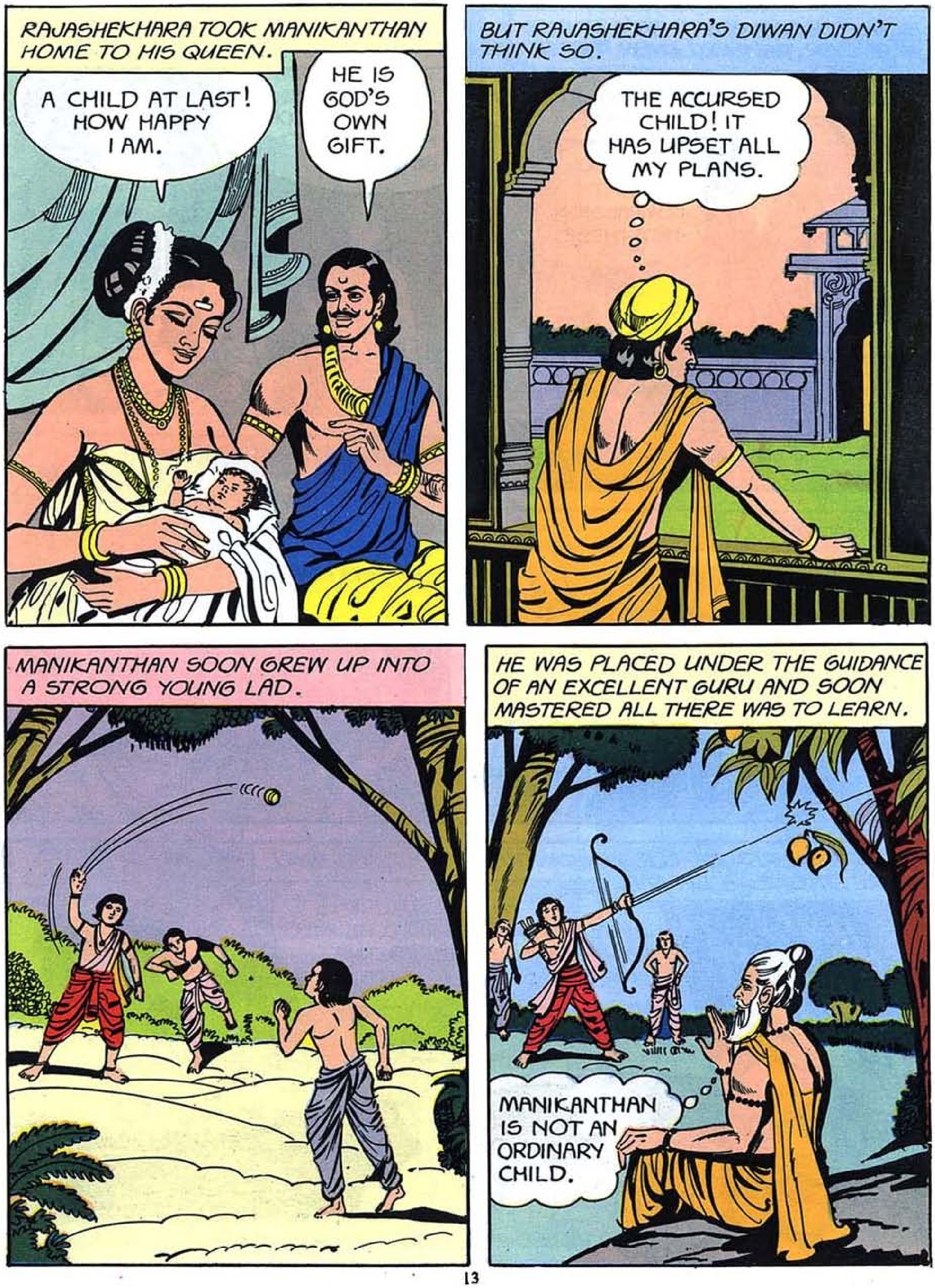

A BABY'S CRY? HERE?

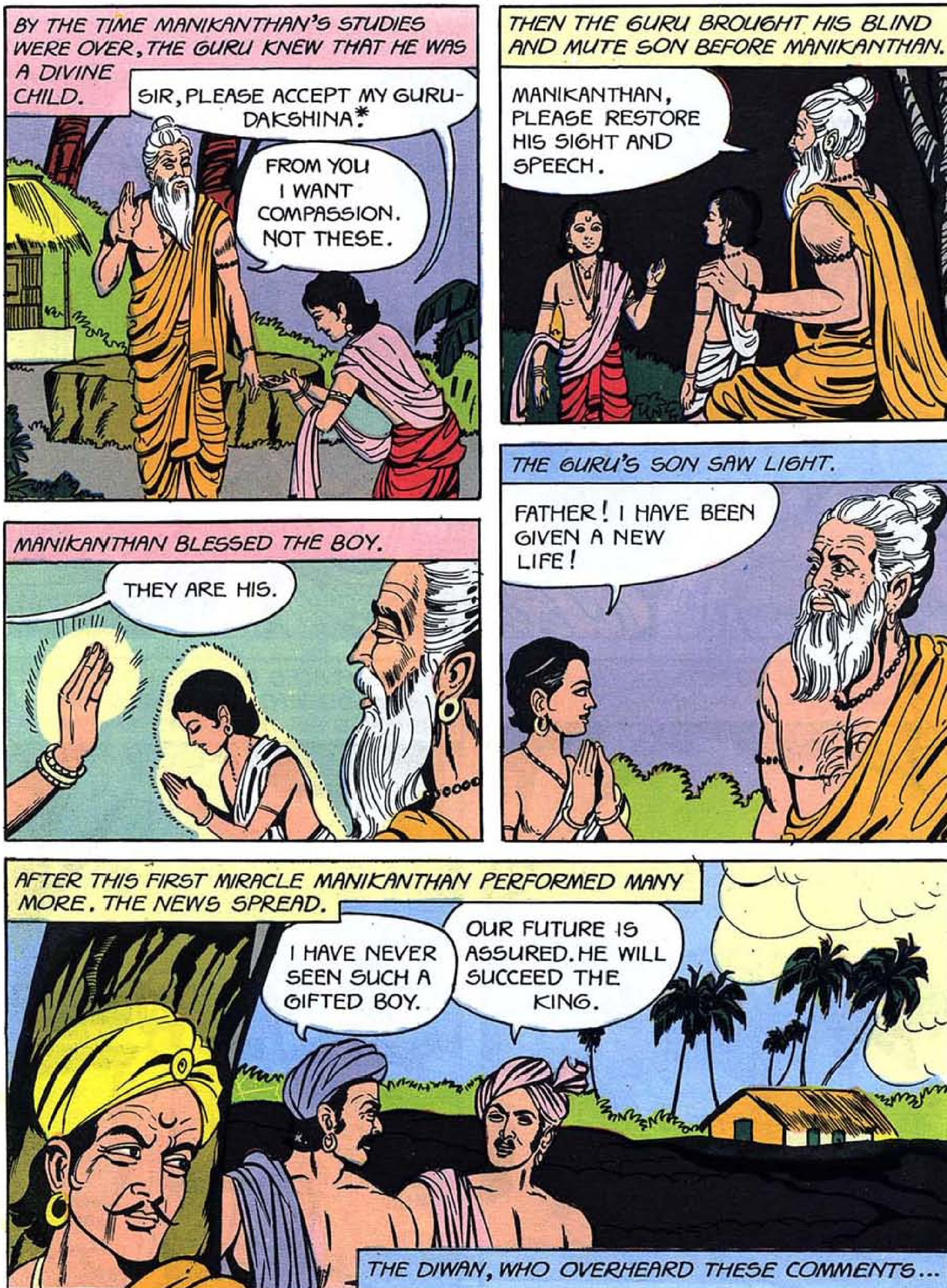

RAJASHEKHARA WALKED IN THE DIRECTION FROM WHICH THE SOUND CAME.


HE SAW A HELPLESS BABY LYING ALL ALONE ON A ROCK.
POOR BABY! DON'T CRY!

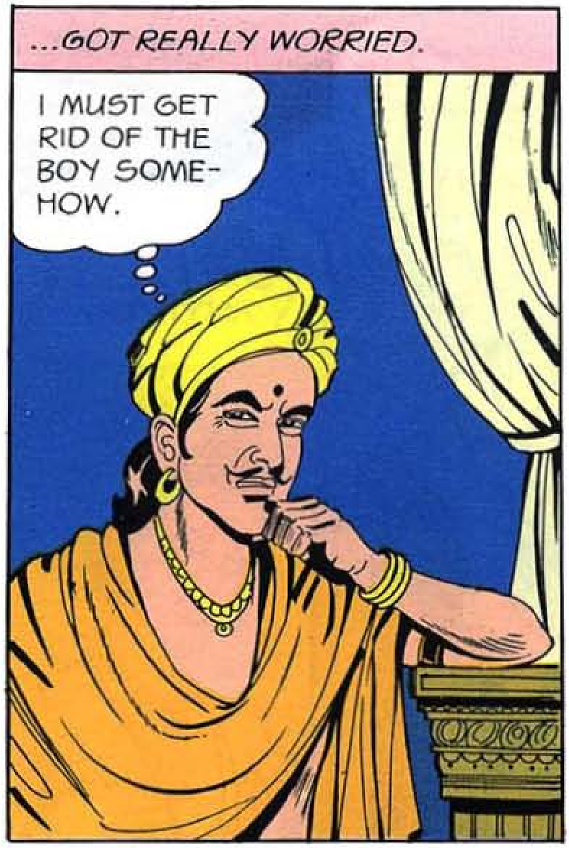

HE LOOKED AROUND.
NOT A SOUL IN SIGHT. TO WHOM COULD IT BELONG?


WHAT SHOULD I DO? SHOULD I TAKE HIM HOME? OR SHOULD I LEAVE HIM HERE?
WHILE HE DEBATED WITH HIMSELF A BRAHMAN SUDDENLY APPEARED BEFORE HIM.
DO NOT HESITATE, O KING. TAKE HIM HOME.
BUT WHO IS HE?
YOU WILL KNOW WHEN HE IS TWELVE YEARS OLD.
THEN WHEN THE BRAHMAN WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE—
WAIT! WHAT SHALL I CALL HIM?
CALL HIM MANIKANTHAN, AFTER THE GOLD BELL WHICH HANGS ROUND HIS NECK.


RAJASHEKHARA TOOK MANIKANTHAN HOME TO HIS QUEEN.
A CHILD AT LAST! HOW HAPPY I AM.
HE IS GOD'S OWN GIFT.
BUT RAJASHEKHARA'S DIWAN DIDN'T THINK SO.
THE ACCURSED CHILD! IT HAS UPSET ALL MY PLANS.
MANIKANTHAN SOON GREW UP INTO A STRONG YOUNG LAD.
HE WAS PLACED UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF AN EXCELLENT GURU AND SOON MASTERED ALL THERE WAS TO LEARN.
MANIKANTHAN IS NOT AN ORDINARY CHILD.

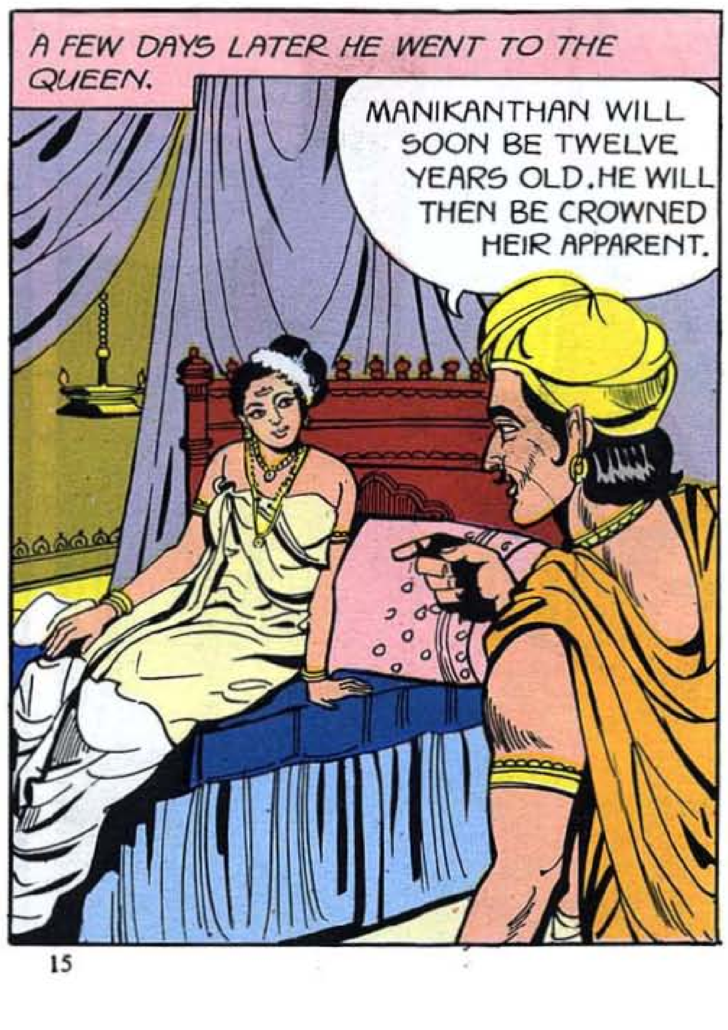


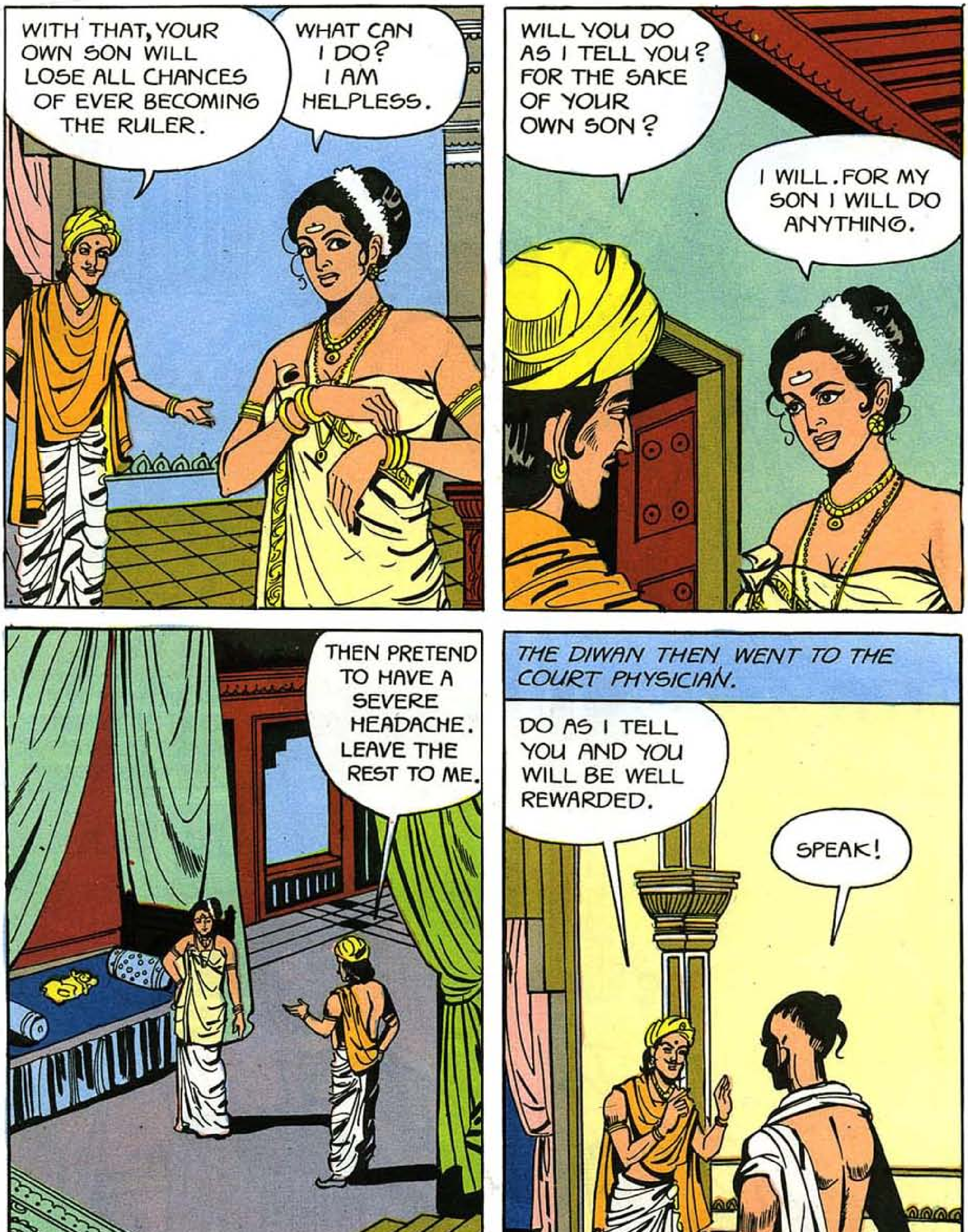
*THE TRADITIONAL TRIBUTE GIVEN BY A DISCIPLE TO HIS TEACHER

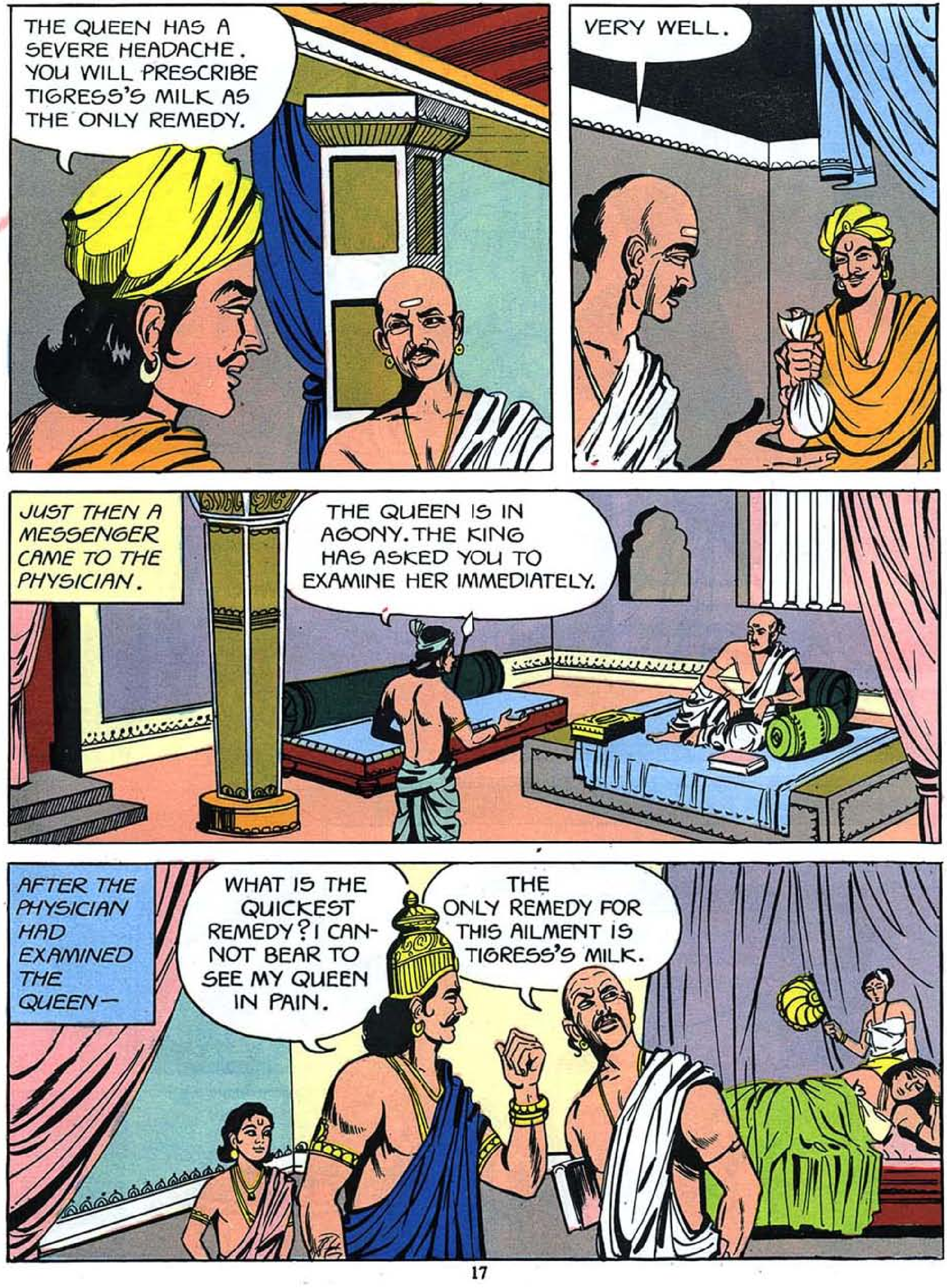

...GOT REALLY WORRIED.
I MUST GET RID OF THE BOY SOMEHOW.

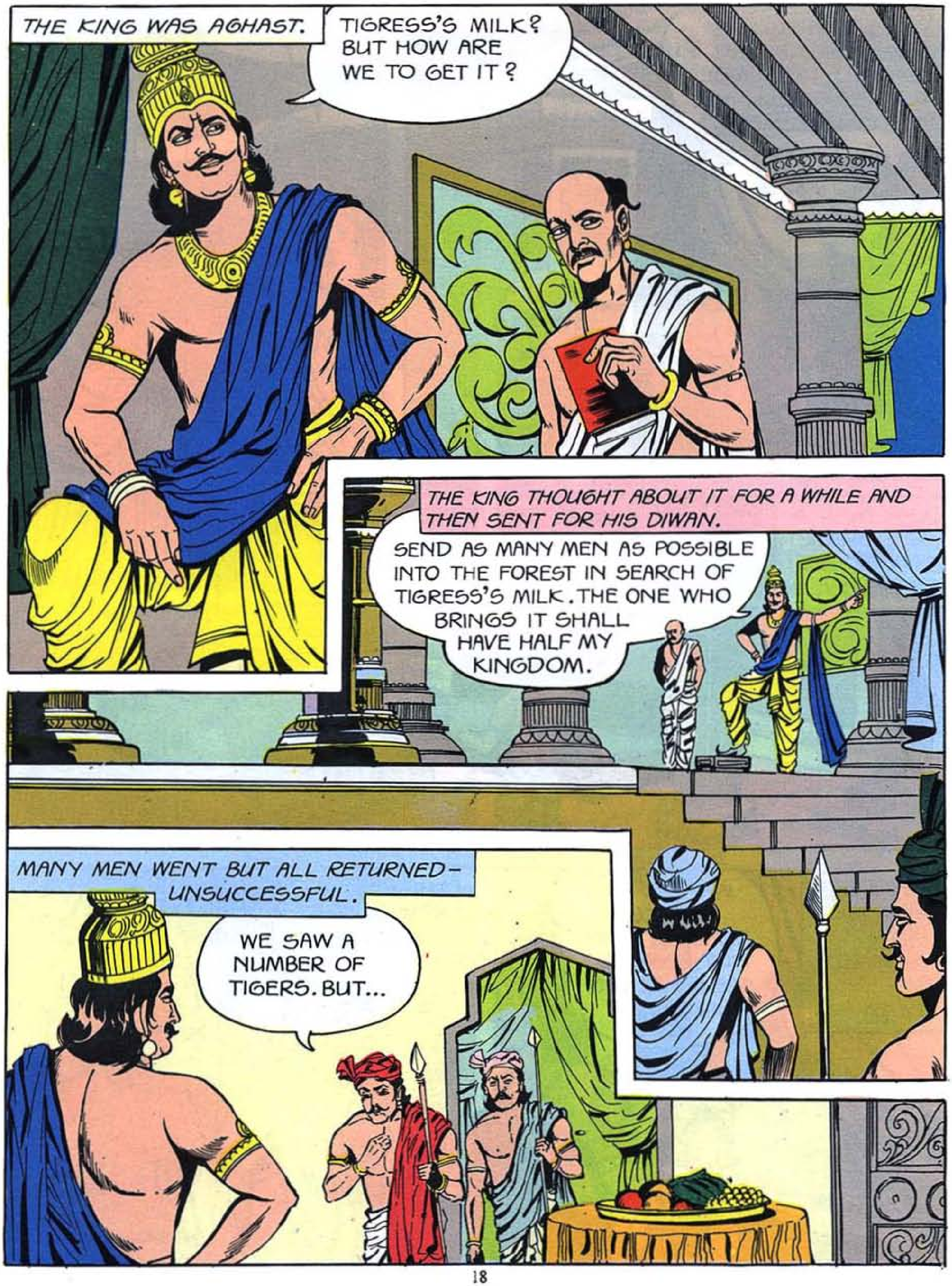

AND THEN THE UNFORESEEN HAPPENED. THE QUEEN GAVE BIRTH TO A SON.
ALAS! WHY WERE YOU NOT BORN EARLIER? NOW YOU WILL NEVER BECOME KING. UNLESS...


THE DIWAN WAS JUBILANT.
THE THRONE SHALL YET BE MINE!


A FEW DAYS LATER HE WENT TO THE QUEEN.
MANIKANTHAN WILL SOON BE TWELVE YEARS OLD. HE WILL THEN BE CROWNED HEIR APPARENT.


WITH THAT, YOUR OWN SON WILL LOSE ALL CHANCES OF EVER BECOMING THE RULER.
WHAT CAN I DO? I AM HELPLESS.
WILL YOU DO AS I TELL YOU? FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR OWN SON?
I WILL. FOR MY SON I WILL DO ANYTHING.
THEN PRETEND TO HAVE A SEVERE HEADACHE. LEAVE THE REST TO ME.
THE DIWAN THEN WENT TO THE COURT PHYSICIAN.
DO AS I TELL YOU AND YOU WILL BE WELL REWARDED.
SPEAK!


THE QUEEN HAS A SEVERE HEADACHE. YOU WILL PRESCRIBE TIGRESS'S MILK AS THE ONLY REMEDY.
VERY WELL.
JUST THEN A MESSENGER CAME TO THE PHYSICIAN.
THE QUEEN IS IN AGONY. THE KING HAS ASKED YOU TO EXAMINE HER IMMEDIATELY.
AFTER THE PHYSICIAN HAD EXAMINED THE QUEEN—
WHAT IS THE QUICKEST REMEDY? I CANNOT BEAR TO SEE MY QUEEN IN PAIN.
THE ONLY REMEDY FOR THIS AILMENT IS TIGRESS'S MILK.



THE KING WAS AGHAST.
TIGRESS'S MILK? BUT HOW ARE WE TO GET IT?
THE KING THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR A WHILE AND THEN SENT FOR HIS DIWAN.
SEND AS MANY MEN AS POSSIBLE INTO THE FOREST IN SEARCH OF TIGRESS'S MILK. THE ONE WHO BRINGS IT SHALL HAVE HALF MY KINGDOM.
MANY MEN WENT BUT ALL RETURNED – UNSUCCESSFUL.
WE SAW A NUMBER OF TIGERS. BUT...

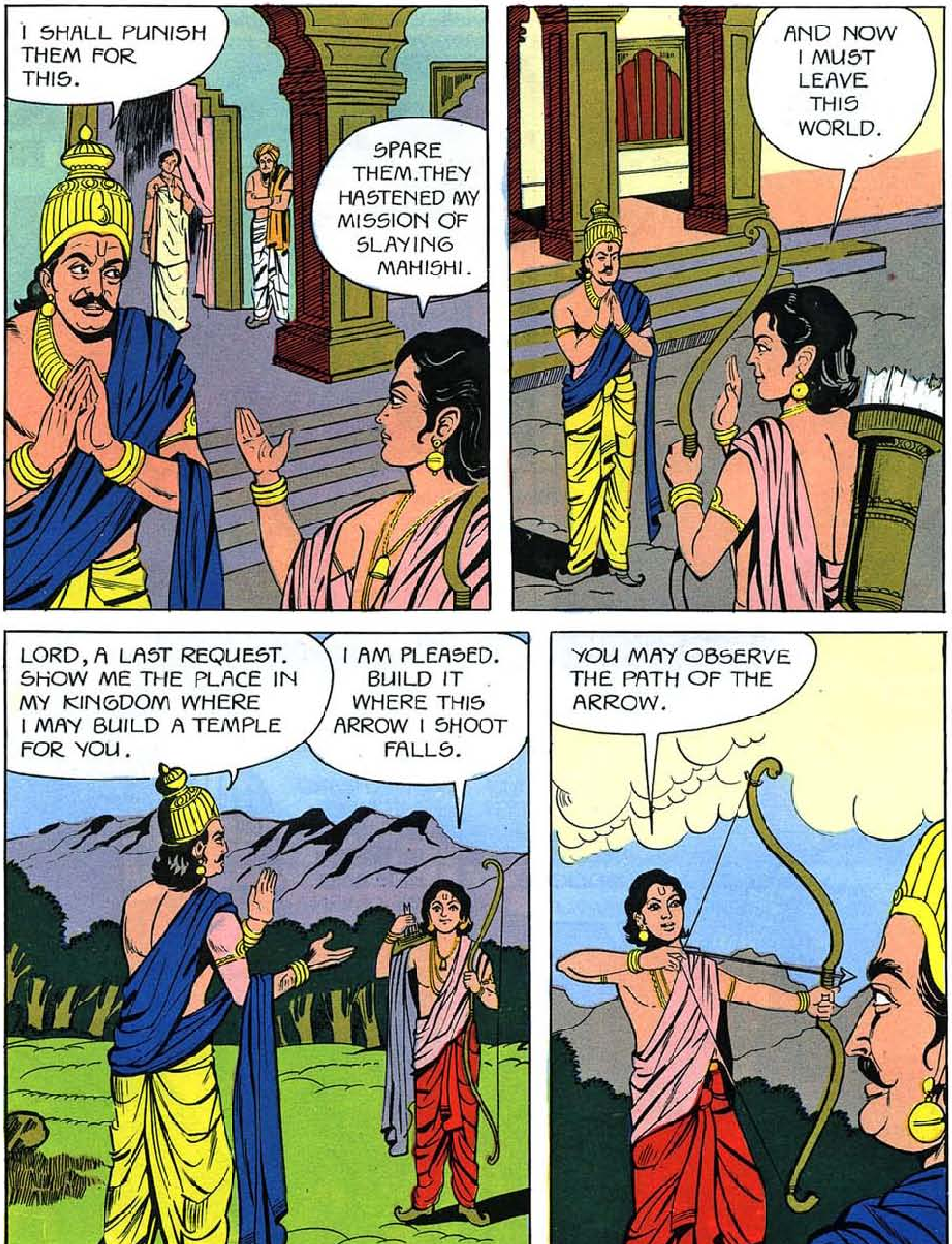

THEN, EXACTLY AS THE WICKED DIWAN HAD FORESEEN—
FATHER, LET ME GO ON THIS ERRAND!
MANIKANTHAN, NO! YOU ARE TOO YOUNG.
FOR MY MOTHER'S SAKE LET ME GO, FATHER.
HOW CAN I LET YOU GO ON SUCH A DANGEROUS VENTURE.
BUT MANIKANTHAN PERSISTED AND RAJASHEKHARA HAD TO YIELD.
ALL RIGHT, MY SON. GO IF YOU MUST. BUT TAKE CARE.
MANIKANTHAN SET OUT FOR THE FOREST.

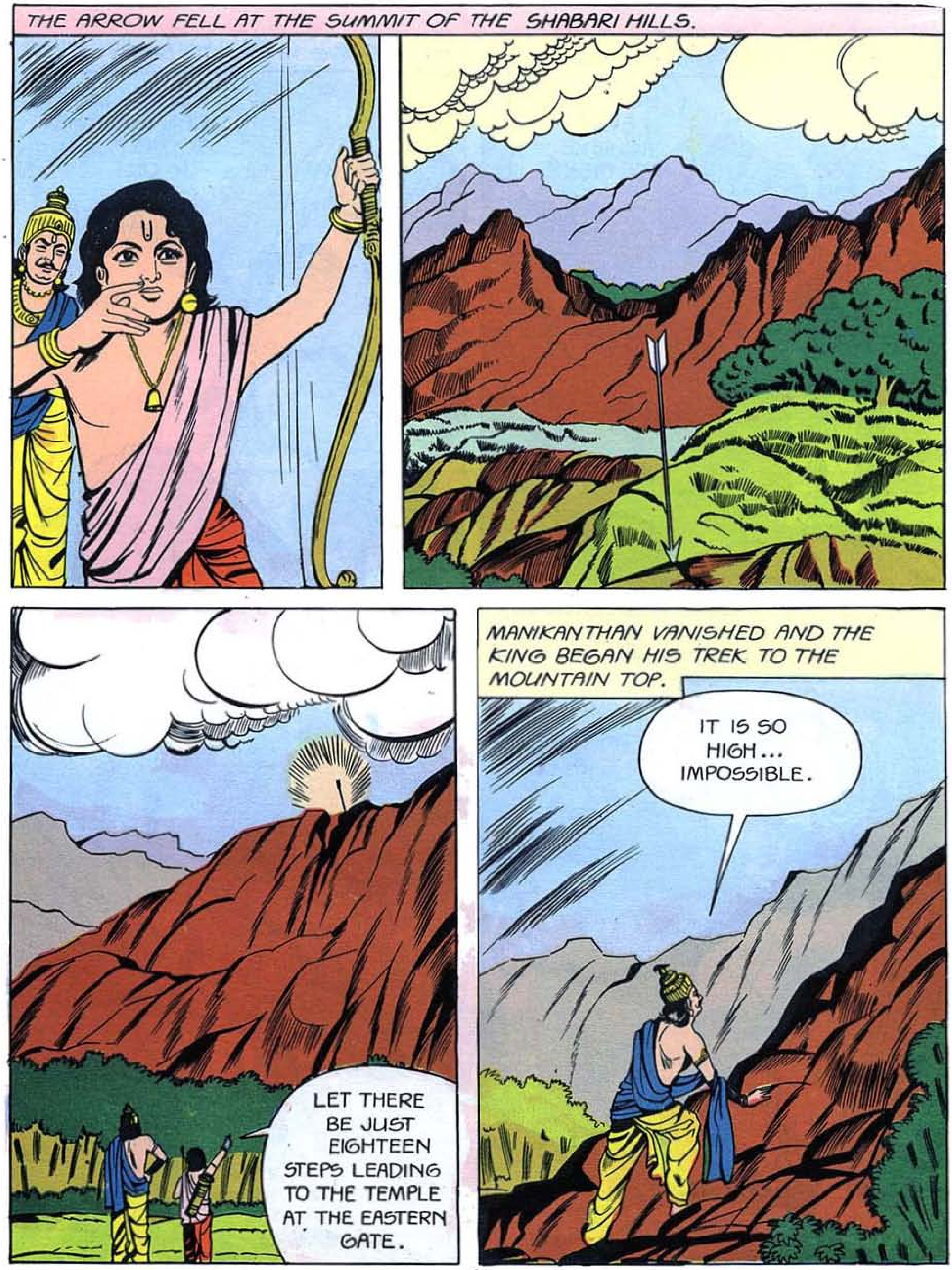

AS HE WANDERED DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO IT HE CAME TO THE DOMAIN OF MAHISHI, WHO LIVED IN THAT FOREST.
WHO IS THIS CREATURE WHO DARES TO TRESPASS ON OUR FOREST? I MUST TELL MY MISTRESS.
THE ASURA RAN TO MAHISHI.
THERE IS A BOY ROAMING IN OUR FORESTS.
HOW DARE HE, WITHOUT MY PERMISSION! I'LL DESTROY HIM.
MAHISHI WENT UP TO MANIKANTHAN AND. ATTACKED HIM.
COME, MAHISHI. MY EARTHLY MISSION IS ABOUT TO BE FULFILLED.

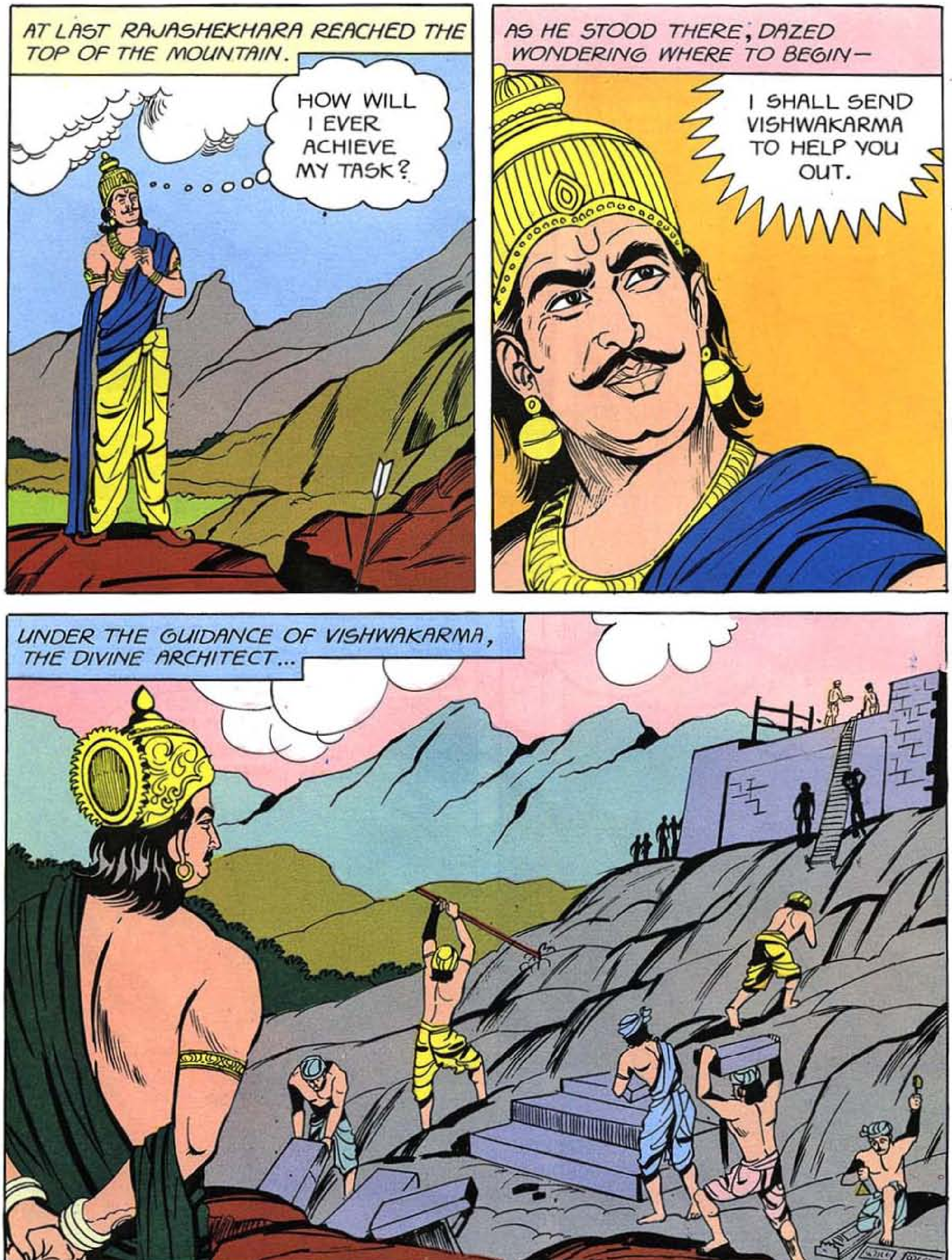

A FIERCE BATTLE ENSUED.
MANIKANTHAN SOON KILLED MAHISHI.
AS MANIKANTHAN CONTINUED HIS SEARCH FOR A TIGRESS, INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS, APPEARED BEFORE HIM.
I SHALL TAKE THE FORM OF A TIGRESS AND COME WITH YOU INTO THE CITY AS YOUR MOUNT.
THE DEVAS WHO HAD ACCOMPANIED INDRA ALSO TURNED THEMSELVES INTO TIGRESSES.
WE WILL FOLLOW YOU INTO THE CITY.

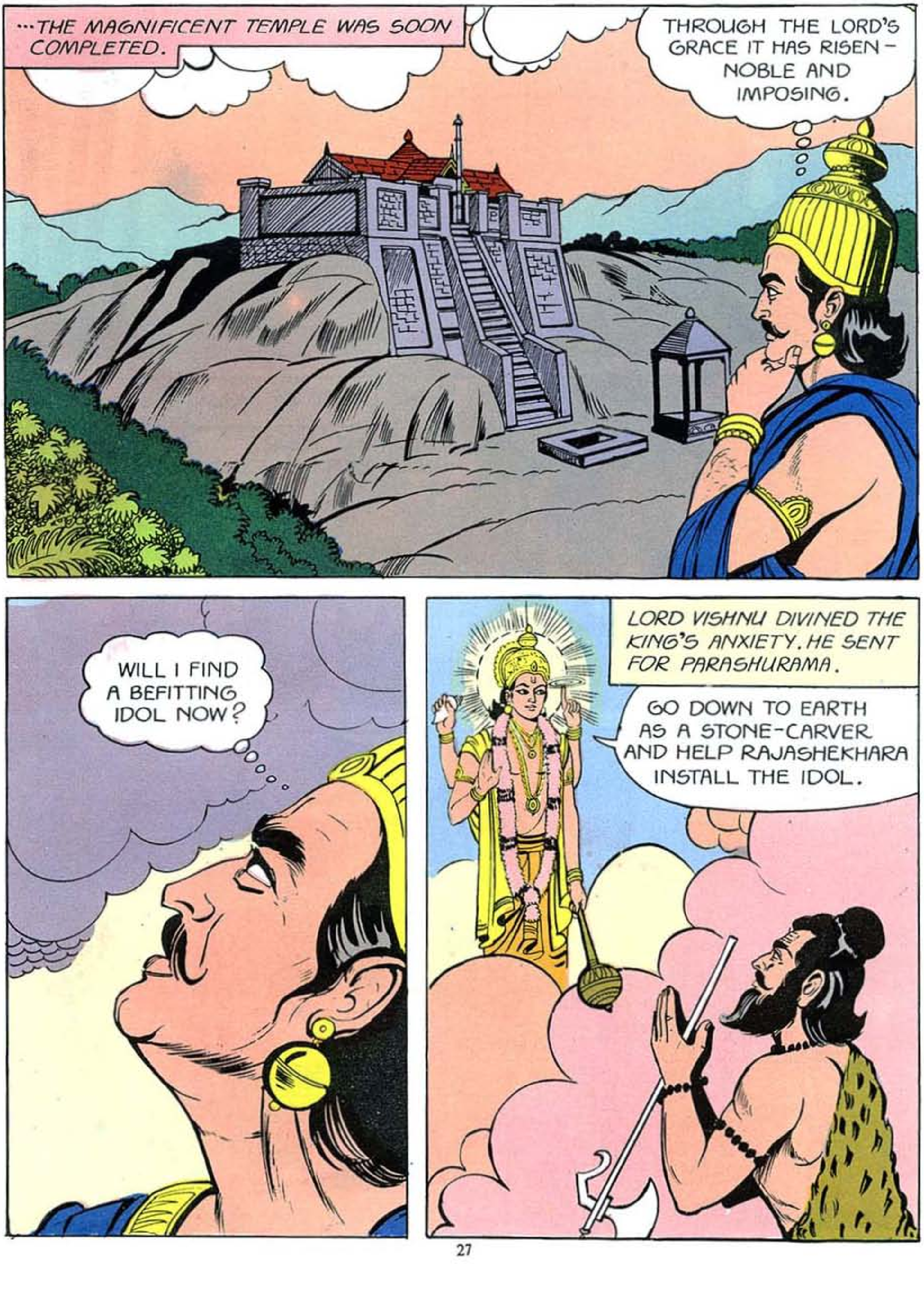

AS MANIKANTHAN RODE INTO THE CITY ON HIS TERRIFYING MOUNT FOLLOWED BY AN EQUALLY TERRIFYING RETINUE—
TIGERS!
HELP!
RUN!
ONE OF THE CITIZENS RAN TO RAJASHEKHARA.
MANIKANTHAN HAS RETURNED... WITH A HORDE OF TIGRESSES.
THE KING, WHO RUSHED OUT TO SEE THIS UNUSUAL SIGHT, WAS STUNNED.
MANIKANTHAN IS TWELVE TODAY. TODAY I WILL KNOW WHO HE IS.


JUST THEN HE HEARD A DIVINE VOICE.
MANIKANTHAN IS NONE BUT GOD HIMSELF.
RAJASHEKHARA RAN FORWARD AND FELL AT MANIKANTHAN'S FEET.
PLEASE SEND THE TIGRESSES AWAY, MANIKANTHAN. MY PEOPLE ARE TERROR-STRICKEN.
MANIKANTHAN SMILED, AND THE TIGRESSES VANISHED.
AS SOON AS YOU LEFT, THE QUEEN RECOVERED. I BECAME SUSPICIOUS.
MY SUSPICIONS WERE CONFIRMED WHEN I OVERHEARD A CONVER-SATION BETWEEN HER AND MY DIWAN.


I SHALL PUNISH THEM FOR THIS.
SPARE THEM.THEY HASTENED MY MISSION OF SLAYING MAHISHI.
AND NOW I MUST LEAVE THIS WORLD.
LORD, A LAST REQUEST. SHOW ME THE PLACE IN MY KINGDOM WHERE I MAY BUILD A TEMPLE FOR YOU.
I AM PLEASED. BUILD IT WHERE THIS ARROW I SHOOT FALLS.
YOU MAY OBSERVE THE PATH OF THE ARROW.


THE ARROW FELL AT THE SUMMIT OF THE SHABARI HILLS.
LET THERE BE JUST EIGHTEEN STEPS LEADING TO THE TEMPLE AT THE EASTERN GATE.
MANIKANTHAN VANISHED AND THE KING BEGAN HIS TREK TO THE MOUNTAIN TOP.
IT IS SO HIGH... IMPOSSIBLE.


AT LAST RAJASHEKHARA REACHED THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN.
HOW WILL I EVER ACHIEVE MY TASK?
AS HE STOOD THERE, DAZED WONDERING WHERE TO BEGIN–
I SHALL SEND VISHWAKARMA TO HELP YOU OUT.
UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF VISHWAKARMA, THE DIVINE ARCHITECT...

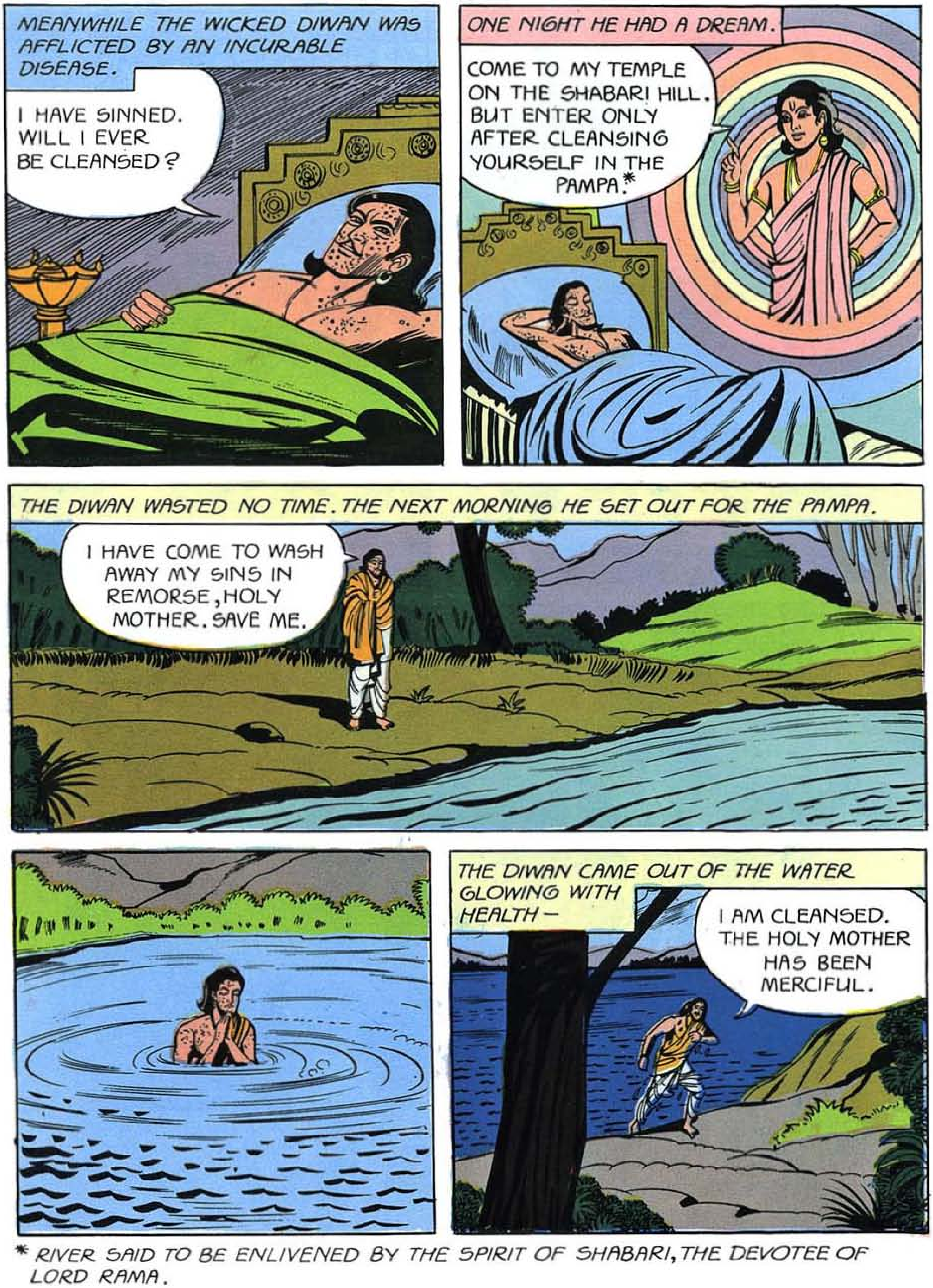

...THE MAGNIFICENT TEMPLE WAS SOON COMPLETED.
THROUGH THE LORD'S GRACE IT HAS RISEN – NOBLE AND IMPOSING.
WILL I FIND A BEFITTING IDOL NOW?
LORD VISHNU DIVINED THE KING'S ANXIETY. HE SENT FOR PARASHURAMA.
GO DOWN TO EARTH AS A STONE-CARVER AND HELP RAJASHEKHARA INSTALL THE IDOL.


PARASHURAMA LEFT FOR RAJASHEKHARA'S PALACE IN THE GARB OF A SCULPTOR.

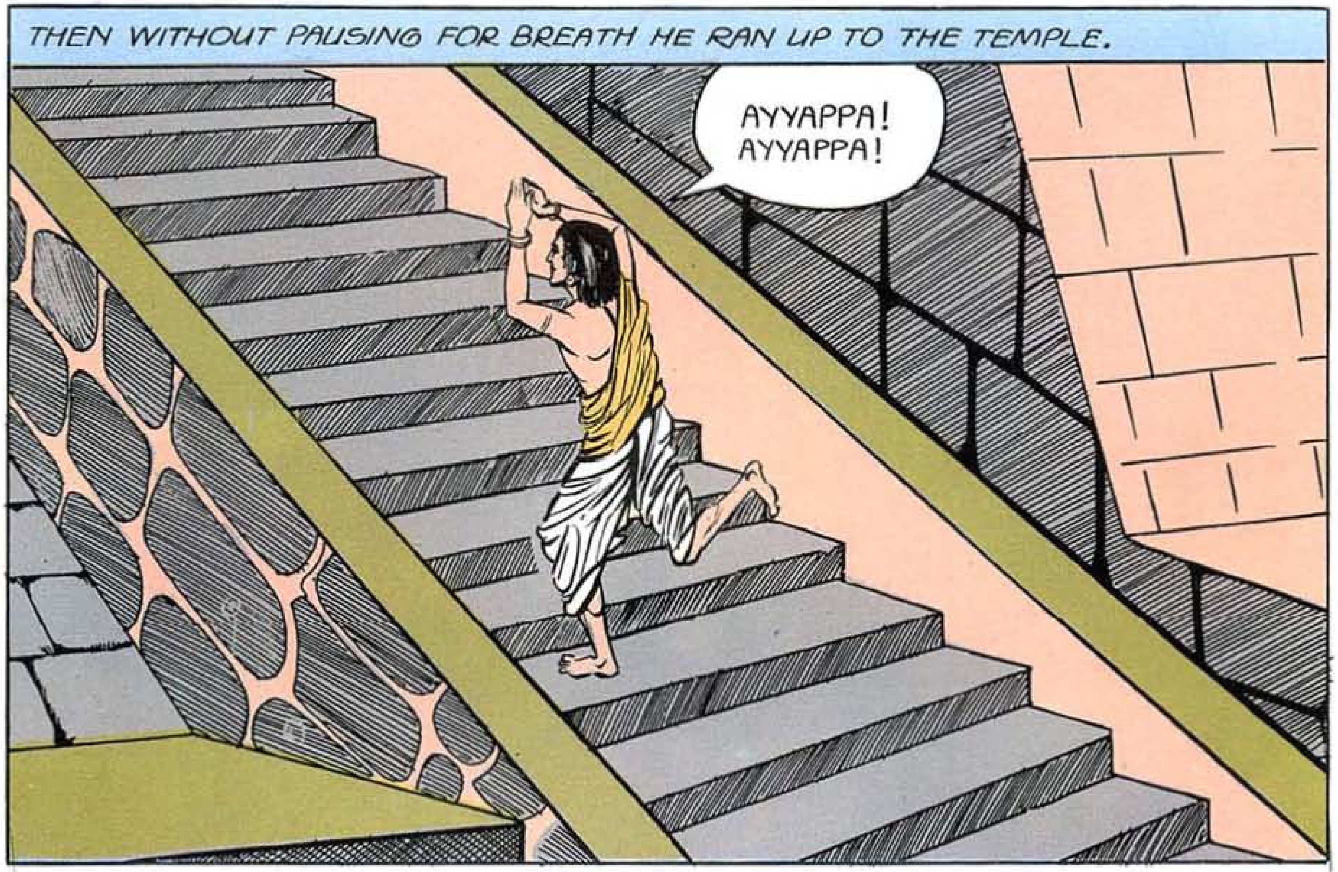

AT THE KING'S COURT–
I HAVE HEARD OF YOUR PROBLEM. I MAY BE ABLE TO HELP.
SHOW ME YOUR WARES BEFORE YOU TAKE UP THE CHALLENGING TASK.

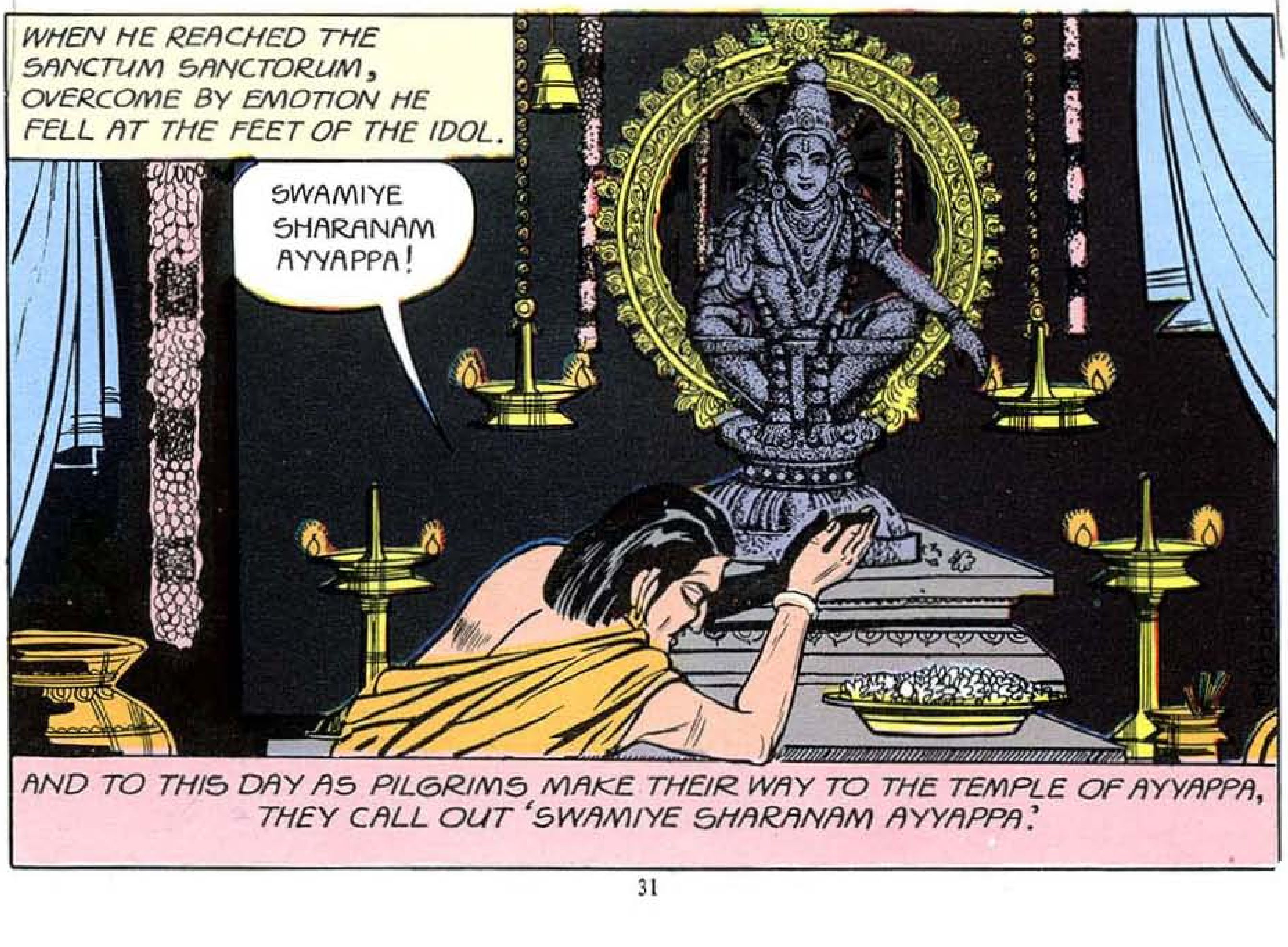

THEY ARE FLAW-LESS, EACH ONE OF THEM.


YOU ARE NO ORDINARY SCULPTOR. TELL ME THE TRUTH. WHO ARE YOU?
I AM PARASHURAMA. I HAVE ALREADY FASHIONED THE IDOL.
PARASHURAMA ASSUMED HIS OWN FORM.
TODAY, THE DAY OF MAKARA SANKRANTI, IS AUSPICIOUS. I SHALL INSTALL THE IDOL STRAIGHTAWAY.
...AND THUS IT WAS THAT THE IMAGE OF AYYAPPA, AS MANIKANTHAN CAME TO BE POPULARLY KNOWN, WAS SANCTIFIED.



* RIVER SAID TO BE ENLIVENED BY THE SPIRIT OF SHABARI, THE DEVOTEE OF LORD RAMA.


THEN WITHOUT PAUSING FOR BREATH HE RAN UP TO THE TEMPLE.
AYYAPPA! AYYAPPA!


WHEN HE REACHED THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM, OVERCOME BY EMOTION HE FELL AT THE FEET OF THE IDOL.
SWAMIYE SHARANAM AYYAPPA!
AND TO THIS DAY AS PILGRIMS MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE TEMPLE OF AYYAPPA, THEY CALL OUT 'SWAMIYE SHARANAM AYYAPPA.'

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Amar Chitra Katha is a collection of illustrated classics that retell stories from Indian mythology, history, folktale and legend, through the fascinating medium of comics. Over 400 titles have been published in the Amar Chitra Katha comic series that are approved by parents, appreciated by children and accepted by schools.



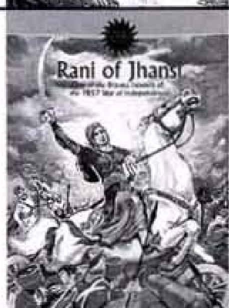
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Editor: Anant Pai

Script: Shyamala Mahadevan Illustrations: M. Mohandas Cover: C.M. Vitankar

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